

IN THE CLAIMS:

1-26. (Canceled)

27. (Currently Amended) The surgical dissector of claim 25 71, wherein the shaft includes one or more articulation joints carried by the shaft to permit the distal end portion to move relative to the more proximal portion of the shaft.

28. (Canceled)

29. (Currently Amended) The surgical dissector as described in claim 27 72 wherein the ~~articulation mechanism~~ actuator further comprises a rotatable member operably coupled to the ~~articulatable distal~~ dissecting surface, wherein when the rotatable member rotates, the ~~articulatable distal~~ dissecting surface articulates.

30. (Canceled)

31. (Currently Amended) The surgical dissector as described in claim 26 71 wherein at least a portion of the light emitter is disposed to contact and dissect tissue.

32. (Currently Amended) The surgical dissector as described in claim 26 71 wherein the light emitter comprises ~~is emitted from~~ an LED or a light transmission pipe.

33. (Currently Amended) The surgical dissector as described in claim 25 71 wherein at least a portion of the shaft is flexible.

34. (Currently Amended) The surgical dissector as described in claim 25 71 further comprising an attachment feature ~~about the distal surface~~ end portion for the attachment of a guide therein.

35. (Previously Presented) The surgical dissector as described in claim 34 wherein the attachment feature comprises an aperture for the reception of the guide therein.

36. (Currently Amended) The surgical dissector as described in claim 25 71 wherein the articulatable distal surface is attached to the shaft by at least one pivot.
37. (Currently Amended) The surgical dissector as described in claim 26 71 wherein the light source emitter has a luminous intensity between about 20 lux and about 50,000 lux.
38. (Currently Amended) The surgical dissector as described in claim 26 71 wherein the light emitter is carried at a distal tip of the shaft and has at least one arcuate surface.
39. (Currently Amended) The surgical dissector as described in claim 25 71 wherein the ~~distal surface~~ tissue dissecting surface can articulate through an angle of up to about 170 degrees.
40. (Canceled)
41. (Previously Presented) The surgical dissector as described in claim 35 wherein the guide fits over the attachment feature.
42. (Previously Presented) The surgical dissector as described in claim 38 wherein the distal tip is clear.
43. (Previously Presented) A method for separating a tissue at a selected site comprising:
- a) positioning a dissection surface of a dissector near to selected tissue, the dissector including an elongated shaft with a dissecting surface at a distal end of the shaft and a position indicator near the dissection surface;

b) advancing the dissecting surface through the selected tissue to create a desired dissection path while monitoring the position indicator through the tissue; and

c) simultaneously articulating the dissecting surface relative to the shaft.

44. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 43 wherein the dissector includes a guide.

45. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 43 wherein the dissector includes a port for fluid dissection.

46. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 43 wherein the dissector includes a working lumen.

47. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 43, wherein advancing includes separating a tubular structure from connective tissue and the structure of a blood vessel.

48. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 47 wherein dissector includes a guide.

49. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 47 wherein the dissector includes a port for fluid dissection.

50. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 47 wherein the dissector includes a working lumen.

51. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 47, wherein the blood vessel is a pulmonary vein and the connective tissue is the pericardium.

52. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 43, wherein the steps are part of a procedure for treating atrial fibrillation.

53. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 43, further comprising detecting the position of the dissecting surface prior to advancing the dissecting surface through the selected tissue.

54. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 43, further comprising differentiating tissue by observing a visible energy passing through the selected tissue.

55. (Previously Presented) A method of separating tissue at a selected site with a dissector comprising an articulatable dissecting surface, comprising:

- a) positioning a dissecting surface of the dissector near to a first side of the selected tissue when the first side of the tissue is obscured from a user's line of sight by a visible second side of the tissue including remotely articulating the dissecting surface, the dissecting surface having associated therewith a position indicator for indicating the position of the dissection surface;
- b) monitoring the position indicator through the selected tissue to detect the position of the dissecting surface; and
- c) advancing the dissecting surface through the selected tissue to create a desired dissecting path.

56. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein the dissector includes a guide or suture.

57. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein the dissector includes a port for fluid dissection.

58. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein the dissector includes a working lumen.

59. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55, further comprising differentiating tissue between a first tissue and a second tissue by observing the position indicator through the first or second tissues.
60. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 59 wherein the position indicator is a light passing through the selected tissue to determine the desired dissection path.
61. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 60 in which the light can be used to illuminate the surgical area.
62. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein detecting the position includes visually locating a light operatively associated with the dissecting surface by observing the light passing through the selected tissue.
63. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 62 wherein detecting the position includes differentiating tissue by observing the light passing through the selected tissue to determine the desired dissection path.
64. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein the dissecting surface includes a blunt tip that is carried at a distal end portion of the dissector.
65. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55, wherein the steps are performed sequentially.
66. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 in which the dissection path defines a plane in the tissue and the steps of separating tissue are repeated through more than one plane in the tissue.
67. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein advancing the dissecting surface includes creating a path between a pair of pulmonary veins and a pericardium.

68. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 67 wherein the dissector includes a guide.

69. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 67 wherein the dissector includes a port for fluid dissection.

70. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 67 wherein the dissector includes a working lumen.

71. (New) A surgical dissector for dissecting a tissue at a selected site, comprising:

- a) an elongate shaft comprising a proximal end portion and a distal end portion;

- b) the shaft including a tissue dissecting surface carried at the distal end portion of the shaft and including a distal tip;

- c) the shaft being articulable at a location proximal to the dissecting surface, and the dissector including an actuator operable to remotely position the dissecting surface relative to a more proximal portion of the shaft; and

- d) a light emitter associated with the distal end portion of the shaft and disposed to emit light from the dissecting surface to indicate the position of the distal tip for enhancing accuracy of dissection through the tissue.

72. (New) A surgical dissector for dissecting a tissue at a selected site, comprising:

- a) a handle;

- b) an elongate shaft connected to the handle comprising a proximal end portion and a distal end portion, the shaft including a tissue dissecting surface carried at

the distal end portion of the shaft and including a distal tip having a substantially smooth outer surface and a substantially circular cross-sectional shape, the shaft being articulable at a location proximal to the dissecting surface;

c) an actuator associated with the handle and operable to remotely position the dissecting surface relative to a more proximal portion of the shaft; and

d) a light emitter associated with the distal end portion of the shaft and disposed to emit light from the dissecting surface to indicate the position of the distal tip for enhancing accuracy of dissection through the tissue.

73. (New) A surgical dissector for dissecting a tissue at a selected site, comprising:

a) a handle;

b) an elongate shaft connected to the handle comprising a proximal end portion and a distal end portion, the shaft including a tissue dissecting surface carried at the distal end portion of the shaft and including a distal tip, the shaft being articulable at a location proximal to the dissecting surface;

c) an actuator comprising a rotatable knob associated with the handle and operable to remotely position the dissecting surface relative to a more proximal portion of the shaft such that the dissecting surface and the more proximal portion of the shaft remain within a single plane; and

d) a light emitter associated with the distal end portion of the shaft and disposed to emit light from the dissecting surface to indicate the position of the distal tip for enhancing accuracy of dissection through the tissue.

74. (New) A surgical dissector for dissecting tissue at a selected site, comprising:

a) an elongate shaft including (i) a proximal end portion and a distal end terminating at a blunt and rounded translucent dissecting surface, (ii) a lumen for receiving other devices, (iii) at least one articulation joint at a location proximal to the dissecting surface to allow articulation of a shaft portion distal of the articulation joint, and (iv) an aperture in the distal end for receiving a positioning element;

b) a handle connected to the proximal end of the shaft;

c) a rotatable actuator carried by the handle and operable upon rotation to cause articulation of a shaft portion distal of the articulation joint; and

d) a light emitter within the distal end of the shaft for emitting visible light from the dissecting surface.

75. (New) The surgical dissector of claim 74 further comprising a guidewire.

76. (New) The surgical dissector of claim 74 further comprising at least one of the following associated with the shaft to facilitate dissection: a grasper, an inflatable balloon, an expanding cage or arm, retractors, ultrasonic emitter, retractable sharpened surface, endoscope, a port for water jet dissection, an oxygen content sensor, a working lumen, a fixed or rotating knurled ball.

77. (New) The surgical dissector of claim 74 wherein the light emitter comprises a light emitting diode.

78. (New) The surgical dissector of claim 74 wherein the light emitter comprises a fiber optic or light pipe.



79. (New) The surgical dissector of claim 74 wherein the rotatable actuator is operable through engaging gear teeth to cause articulation.